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ABSTRACT

This document presents one in a series of twenty-three case studies derived from in-depth interviews using a sampling of former participants in the Mountain-Plains program, a residential, family-based education program developed to improve the economic potential and lifestyle of selected student families in a six-state area. Each case study contains the following information about a specific student family: biographical data; participation in the educational and community programs; home, income, placement, and employment data; stated problems and/or satisfactions; summaries of the participants' personal and social development; individual ratings of the program; scripts of personal interviews; interviewer comments; and individual test scores and self-assessments. This document presents specific findings on Lisa Williams, an American Indian and a divorcee with two children. The follow-up study reports that she successfully completed a training program and was initially employed but within six months had quit her job and returned to live with her parents on the reservation. (Names in these studies have been changed.) Two other documents are included in the series: a report which examines work and income variables for the group (ED 110 610) and a report which summarizes group findings on personal and social development (CE 014 681). Specific documentation for the instruments utilized in the study are included in both of these related documents. (BM)

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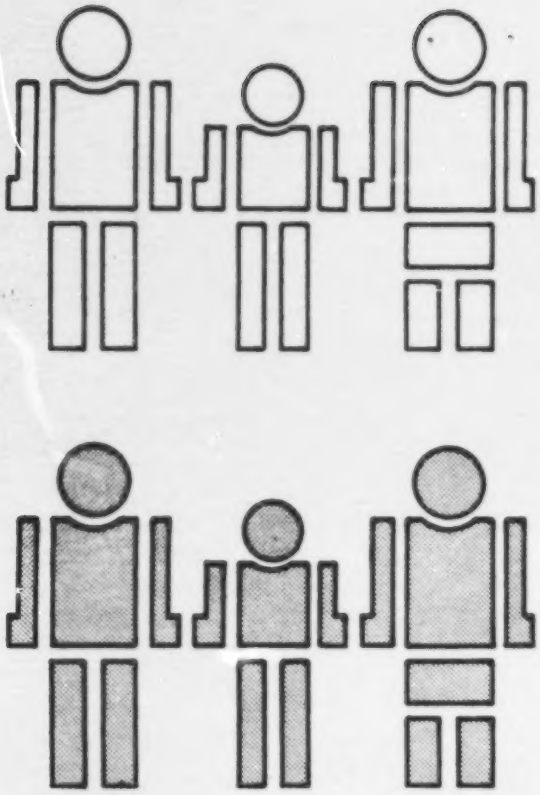

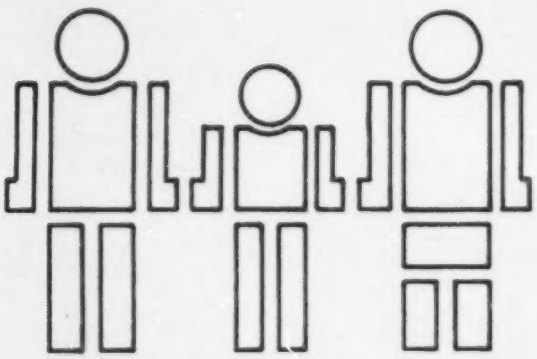

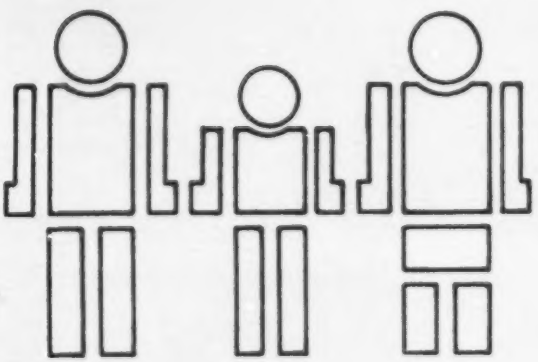

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CASE STUDY REPORT #8

Lisa Williams

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
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MOUNTAIN PLAINS EDUCATION ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM INC.

CASE STUDY REPORT

LISA WILLIAMS

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June, 1975

A Product of Research Services Division
David A. Coyle, Director

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PREFACE

Reports in this series are derived from in depth interviews using a stratified random sample of former Mountain-Plains students. Interviews were conducted from November, 1974 through January, 1975 by Mountain-Plains professional research staff. Case Study Report 1 examines Work and Income variables for the group. Case Study Reports 2 through 25 include specific findings on each family included in the sampling. Case Study Report 25 summarizes group findings on personal and social development. A summary of the research design for the Case Study Reports is documented in: Coyle, David A.; Conrad, Rowan W.; and Myers, Douglas D. In Depth Case Study of Exited Families: A Summary of the Research Design for Phase 1 Preliminary Effects Study. Glasgow, Montana: Mountain-Plains Press, 1974. Documentation for the instruments utilized in the study are included in both Case Study Report 1 and Case Study Report 25. All names in these studies have been changed.

Michael C. Fenenbock
Series Editor

David A. Coyle
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Services Division

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CASE STUDY

LISA WILLIAMS

BACKGROUND

At the time of her application to Mountain-Plains, Lisa Williams was divorced, had a daughter 20 years old, a son 17 years old, and was living with her parents. Of American Indian heritage, Lisa and her family resided on a reservation in southern Montana. She was unemployed and had never been permanently employed. Searching for employment, but lacking salable skills, Lisa's future was dim. Lisa had completed the ninth grade while her daughter had finished high school and her son was at that time enrolled in the eleventh grade.

Her family ties were extremely strong and Lisa had not lived off the reservation with the exception of her husband's military enlistment. (Often, these strong family ties caused Lisa to act outside her own interests when making critical decisions.) Living near a small community in which all members knew and interacted with each other, Lisa's life centered on tribal influences which she took very seriously. Her mother held and still holds a powerful position in the tribal council. Lisa's housing condition was rated quite low with a score of 6 on a scale of 7--7 being the lowest (poorest condition) rating.

When asked (in a pre-center interview) to describe her life style, Lisa responded "Poor, discouraged, nowhere to turn--mother." Family activities were limited due to a lack of monetary income. The family belonged to no community organizations and listed leisure time activities as housework and reading.

Due to extreme economic conditions, the family was highly dependent upon welfare payments including commodities, food stamps and aid for dependent children. As the above circumstances would indicate, Lisa and her family appeared to be an excellent potential family for Mountain-Plains. When asked what occupational areas she would be interested in, Lisa replied that secretarial or business related training would meet her interests and afford her a skill with which to make a life of her own.

PROGRAM PARTICIPATION

The Williams family arrived on center in November, 1973. While in the program, both Lisa and her daughter, Rhonda, enrolled in the Stenographer course area of Office Education. During the course of their stay at Mountain-Plains, Rhonda met and married a base resident and as a result dropped from the program. Opposed to her daughter's marriage, Lisa responded by changing her occupational area from stenographer to receptionist--a career choice considerably lower on the occupational ladder. Lisa wanted to quickly complete so as to leave the program and travel to Wyoming where her daughter had moved--a move she eventually made.

The exit report prepared by her counselor indicated that Lisa was "very eager to go to work" and that she would be best suited to a "job as a clerk-typist or receptionist in a hospital or clinic or any other area which is connected to the medical professions". The Counseling report stated that Lisa had problems with "self-confidence and self-concept" and that treatment (Rogerian) had been administered to deal with this problem. Lisa exited the program almost one year to date of her entrance in November, 1974.

PLACEMENT

Upon completing the program, Lisa was provided assistance by the Wyoming Mountain-Plains office and employment was secured for her at Memorial Hospital in Cheyenne, Wyoming, as a clerk-typist at a wage of $355 per month--a job seen as highly desirable for her by her counselor.

At the six-month interview it was discovered that not only had Lisa quit her job, but that she had returned to Montana as well and was again living with her parents on the reservation. Further investigation revealed that Lisa had been asked to leave the hospital due to frequent and lengthy visits made by members of her family to her station of work--to the extent, the hospital reports, that Lisa could not complete the work required of her position. Again, strong family ties seemed to have worked as a negative rather than a positive influence for Lisa.

The case study interview itself took place in the home of Lisa's parents, located some three miles outside of Wild River, Montana. The home itself is rather old, in disrepair, and could have been better kept. Inside, the living room is literally full of momentos Lisa's mother collected during her tenure as a tribal council member. Upon entering the home the interviewer noted there were approximately 12 individuals lounging about in the living room. Purportedly, all were relatives who also shared the home of Lisa's parents. When filling out the standard interview packet, it became apparent that Lisa's situation remained almost identical to what it had been prior to entering the program. Lisa was unemployed, receiving aid for dependent children, had no savings or insurance, and belonged to no community organizations other than the tribe.

HOME AND INCOME

Although Lisa continues to live with her parental family the family itself has changed considerably. Her oldest child is now married and living away from the nuclear family, which has caused some distress for Lisa. Since her divorce several years ago, she has been somewhat at a loss with herself. As a result, Lisa has turned to her mother for support and a feeling of need. Consequently, efforts to satisfy those needs have left her with little or no independence and virtually no future of her own. During the course of the interview, Lisa's mother entered the room and began to converse with the interviewer, commenting that Lisa had been of much assistance lately as the mother had recently broken her arm and could not perform necessary home care tasks. Her mother further reported that Lisa was running the household completely and doing a very competent job. Later, when her mother left, Lisa candidly admitted that housework was consuming all of her time leaving little or none for herself. When asked if she was dating anyone currently, she responded she was too busy to think about dating at all.

Throughout the course of the interview it became evident that Lisa was unhappy with her current life, but had mixed feelings about her mother's dependence and her own inability to work because of that dependence. Lisa repeatedly mentioned she should be working and that she would never find employment in Wild River--undoubtedly true, as Wild River is a town of approximately 150 people with no industry and very few services.

Due to Lisa's single head-of-household status and her current life situation, any stability or instability concerning her own family is impossible to predict. It

appears that the situation in which she is existing is not conducive to her own self-identity. The dominance of her mother cannot be beneficial, and, to have a life of her own, Lisa would have to begin thinking and acting in her own interest. Currently, she appears unable to do this and the future may be too late.

PERSONAL AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Lisa's Tennessee Self-Concept Scale may be of marginal use, as her self-criticism scale rested on the 15th percentile (one standard deviation below the group mean). The low score on the self-criticism scale would tend to disavow the validity of the other scales. The scales themselves rested near the 50th percentile, with the exception of "physical self" which was near the 20th percentile and "social self" which achieved the 75th percentile. Again the interpretation of these scores could be misleading due to Lisa's inability to deal honestly with the questions. (See Figure 4.)

The two measures of social perception, Neal and Semens Powerlessness Scale and Sorle Anomie Scale, perhaps better reflect the "world" in which Lisa is currently living. On the powerlessness scale, Lisa received a scale score of zero, nearly one and a half standard deviation below her peer norm of 2.8. This score indicates a strong naiveness in her belief that she has the ability to control her surroundings. Her score was also one standard deviation below corresponding group norms from the original study (non-strivers, unorganized and downwardly mobile). This was taken from non-manual workers, again an extremely low (power) score. (See Figure 3.)

Srole's Anomie in turn produced the same type of responses from Lisa. She received a scale score of one (scale equals 0 through 5), with zero being high

in social involvement and trust; 5 being high in Anomie (social normlessness)--defined by Srole as interpersonal alienation ("Trust if you will in all that effects your social self"). The only area that Lisa expressed a lack of confidence in was public officials. The combination of these scales indicate that Lisa is very trusting of all around her and is likely to be used for the benefit of others. This may be due to her environment--protected from the "real world".

These indicators of great trust, and a general feeling of insecurity in herself as indicated by the Mountain-Plains exit report, would make it difficult for Lisa to negotiate a normal working situation as decision making does not appear to be one of her strong personal traits.

EMPLOYMENT

As Lisa is currently unemployed, a discussion was held concerning her job at exit from the program. (Her last employment terminated a year prior to the interview.) No measures were administered for reason of instrument validity. As indicated earlier in this narrative, Lisa had been employed as a clerk-typist in a Wyoming hospital. When questioned regarding her working situation, Lisa indicated that too much had been expected of her and she was unable to adjust to the working environment. Further inquiries disclosed that medical terminology gave her considerable problems and she was finally terminated because she could not complete her work within adequate timelines. This information couples well with that received from Mountain-Plains state office personnel indicating that due to the family visits, Lisa was having difficulty completing her work.

Clearly, Lisa would like to work and provide her own support, and she repeatedly mentioned wishing she were working. There is apparent conflict here as Lisa also says she has strong responsibilities toward her parents, especially with her mother's current disability.

RATING THE MOUNTAIN-PLAINS PROGRAM

In general, Lisa had quite positive reactions towards Mountain-Plains, although when questioned regarding the program's influence in her life, she responded by saying it was a negative influence. (See Table 2 and Figure 5.) When asked to explain, she replied that it was negative in that she was no better off now than when she entered the program. Judging from her surroundings the interviewer must agree, at least in a financial sense. When asked which areas of the program were the most helpful, she responded Communication Skills and Job Training. Accompanying these areas were Counseling, Consumer Education and Budgeting, Community Development, and Health. The areas which Lisa recalled as of little help included Career Guidance, Work Experience, and Recreation. When asked if she would return to Mountain-Plains knowing what she does now about the program, she responded with a definite yes and added this time she would not change her occupational choice. Lisa also indicated that the training she received (receptionist, lowest of the occupational choices in Office Education) was inadequate for the job she had been employed in, (medical file clerk). She indicated she liked the field of work she had been in (the hospital) but that it was too difficult for her to learn the needed vocabulary in such a short time period. Again, Lisa indicated she wished she had stayed in the stenographer program.

When asked to complete the Developmental/Employability Trait (DET) form in terms of her perception of herself both before entering Mountain-Plains and following exit, Lisa recalled that she was satisfactory or above in all categories before she entered the program. Presently, she thought she was unsatisfactory in self-confidence, competence and accuracy. From her work history, this could well be the case. She also indicated that trial interviews conducted in Career Guidance were very helpful and should be required for everyone exiting the program. The "life in general" aspects of the interview again reinforced Lisa's strong family ties. When asked if she coped well with everyday problems, she remarked she did because the family was completely dependent on her for virtually all forms of care. However, she also indicated considerable dissatisfaction with life in general and added she would be happier if she were working. She felt she had "good breaks" in life such as going to Mountain-Plains, but that she did not take full advantage of the educational opportunity she had. Although the family appears to be the major source of her life dissatisfaction, she indicated that helping her family was a source of self-satisfaction--a contradictory statement, perhaps a form of sweet lemon rationalization. She revealed that the one thing that gave her the greatest pleasure was helping other people, i.e., what she is doing at home. When asked about the future, Lisa stated there was a possibility of continuing her education at a training school in New Mexico but that currently it was a remote possibility. Questions relating to health and monetary budgeting were all positive in relation to the directional shift when comparing pre center and post center situations. The monetary situation was considered positive because she could now budget the money

which she received f om AFDC, something she could not do before entering Mountain-Plains.

When asked to complete a DET form for her personal self, the responses were as follows: Unsatisfactory included "punctuality" and "accuracy," Very Satisfactory included "accepts responsibility," "cooperation," "courtesy," "social contact," "dependability," and "responsibility". It is interesting to note that "punctuality" and "accuracy" were checked as unsatisfactory, while "accepts responsibility," "dependability," and "responsibility" were checked as very satisfactory. This appears contradictory, although the preponderance of very satisfactories would indicate that Lisa is not completely dissatisfied with her life situation. (See Table 1.)

SUMMARY

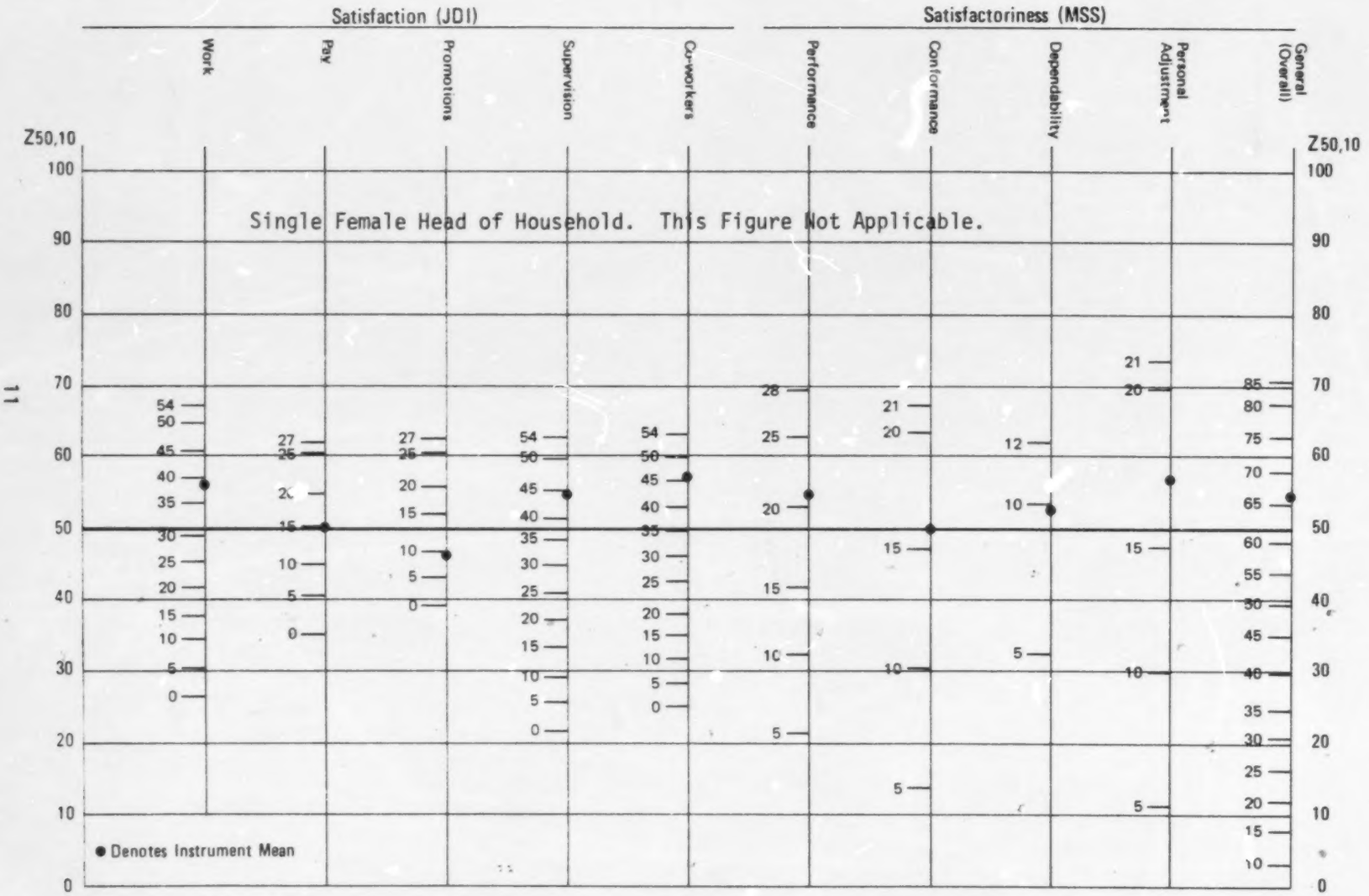
Obviously, Lisa has not made great strides towards establishing herself as an independent entity. Her inability to hold a steady job has added to her frustration. Although she repeatedly indicated that she felt she should be employed, when asked what she had done to find employment, she produced a surprised expression and replied that there "wasn't any place to look for work" in the area in which she lived. Her eagerness to express desire to find employment may have simply been an expected response to what she felt the interviewer wanted to hear.

Although Lisa was extremely pleasant during the course of the interview, her responses seemed disjointed and often contradicted each other. Only when questioned about the apparent contradictions would she give the question

serious consideration. At other times she would simply respond with the briefest answer possible. Lisa's life situation is not good. She repeatedly observed that the work load expected of her at home was enormous and she had little or no time for herself in the current situation. At no time during the interview did she mention her son although she mentioned her daughter a number of times. The effect Mountain-Plains had on Lisa and her family apparently was minimal. There is little possibility of her improving her life situation while continuing to live with her parents, however, she is very reluctant to leave that setting and when asked if she planned on moving, she replied not until her mother could do her own housework. Even when (if) she does leave the protection of the family, it is doubtful that she will be able to negotiate the work-a-day world. Although Lisa completed the Mountain-Plains Program, there are obvious reasons why she has not been a Mountain-Plains "success".

Figure 1

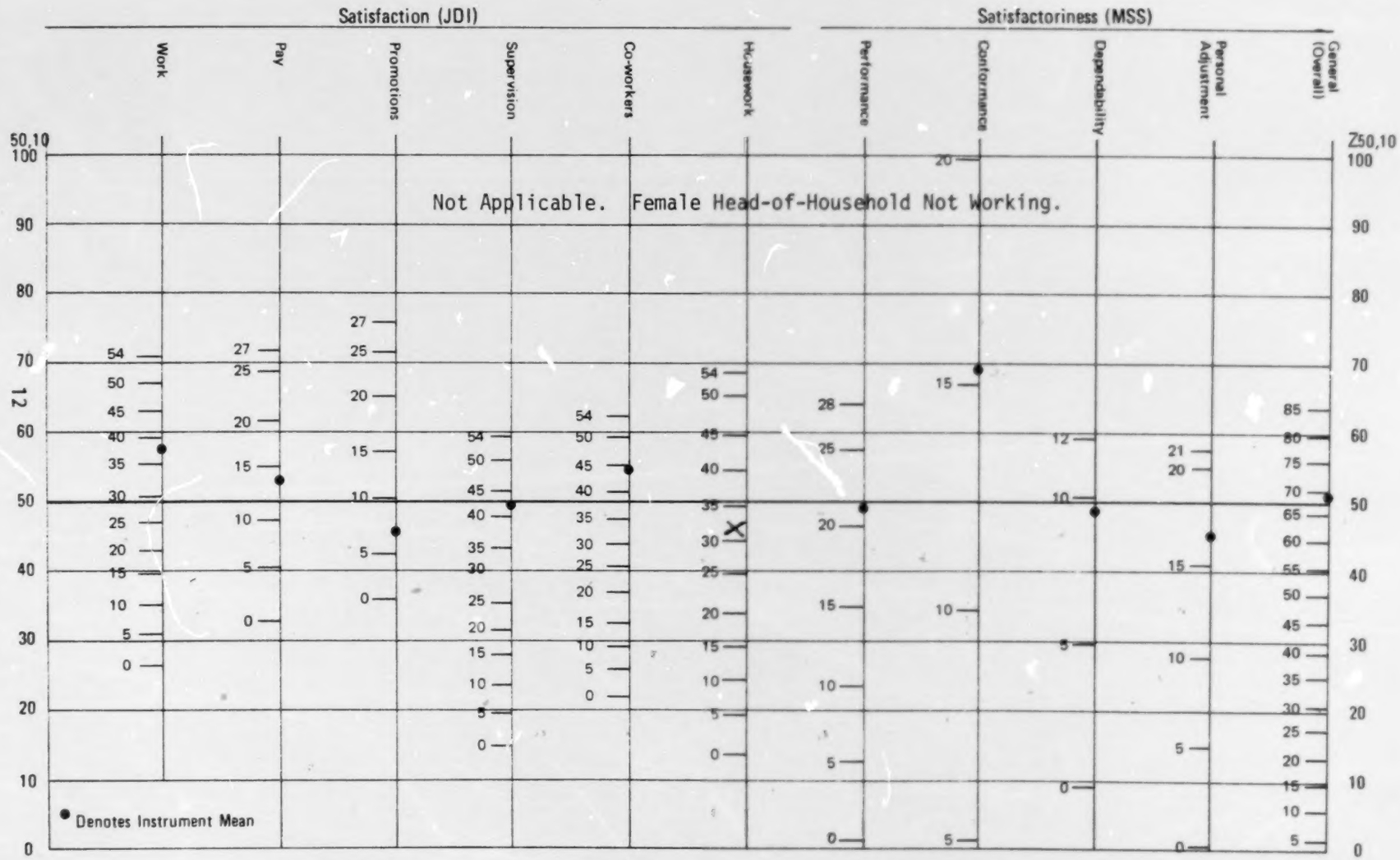
SATISFACTION AND SATISFACTORINESS – MALE



Note: Profile based on entering student scores.

Figure 2

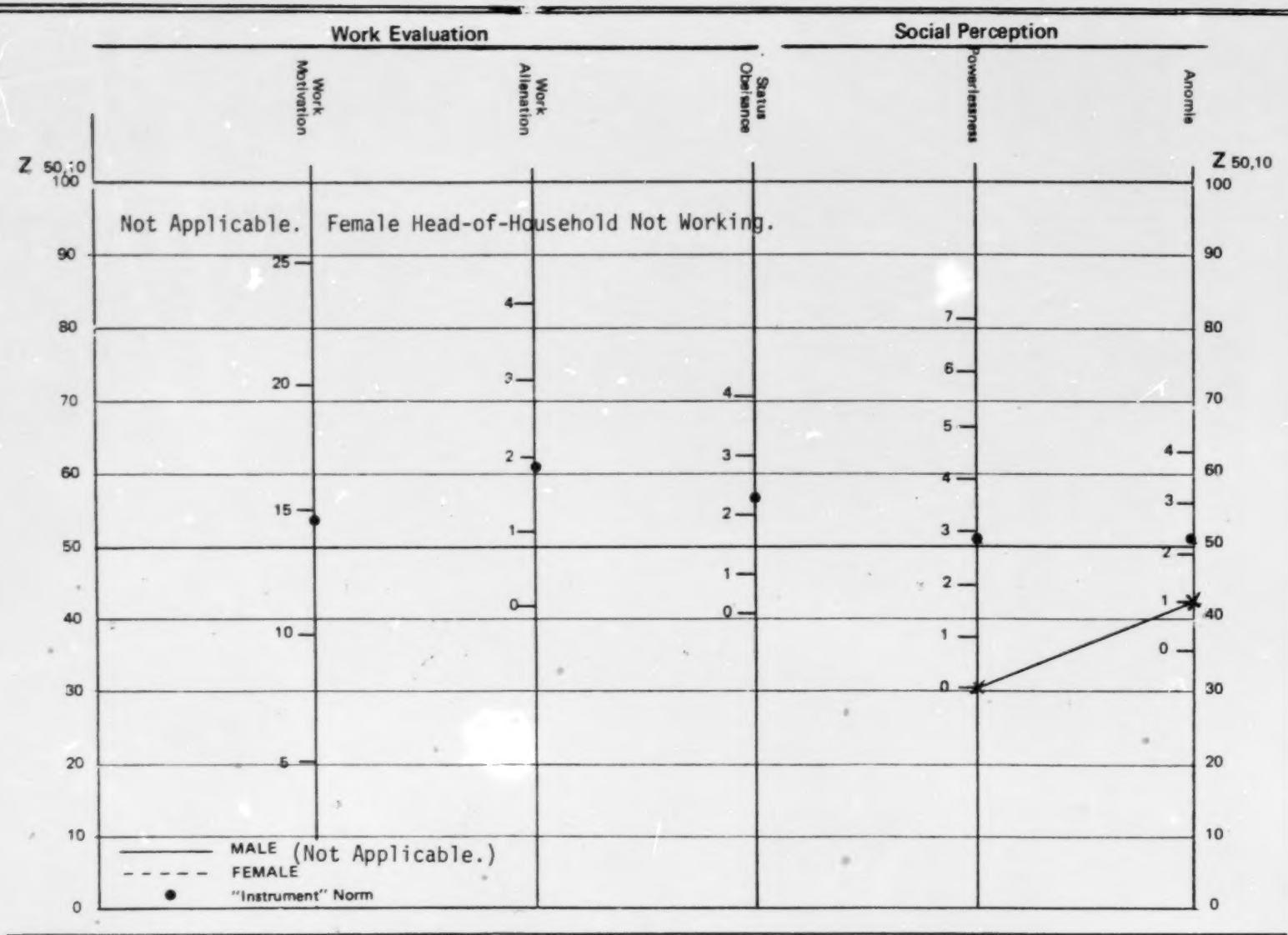
SATISFACTION AND SATISFACTORINESS – FEMALE



Note: Profile based on entering student norms except "Housework" which is based on instrument norm for employment.

Figure 3

MOTIVATION AND ALIENATION



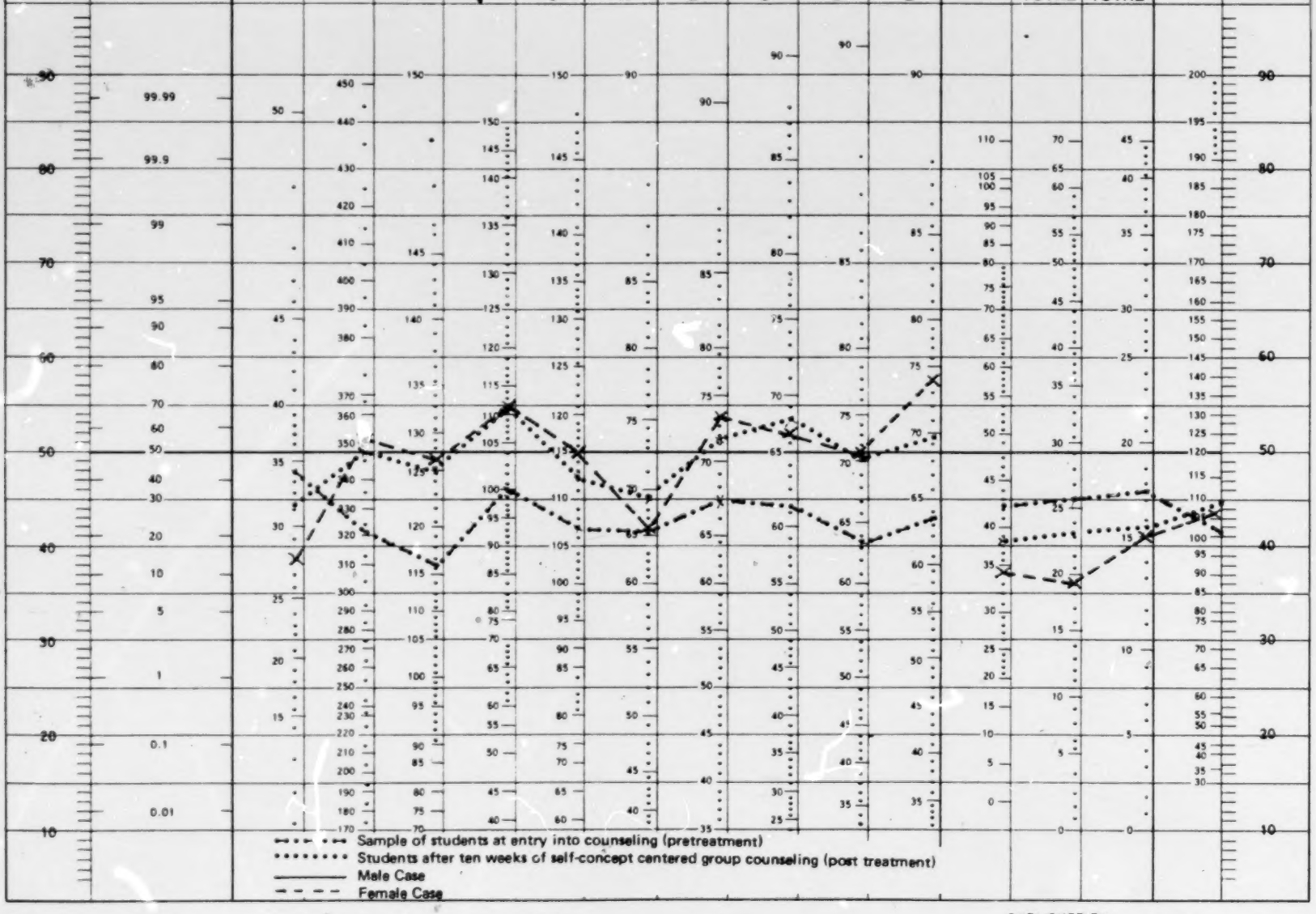
Note: Profile derived from entering student data.

Tennessee Self Concept Scale – Figure 4

PROFILE SHEET

Counseling Form

NAME | SCHOOL GRADE | SEX M F | AGE | DATE | TIME STARTED | TIME FINISHED | TOTAL TIME



Note: This is the standard profile sheet for the TSCS.

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Male					Female			
High		Low			Low		High	
Much	Some	Little	None		None	Little	Some	Much
Not Applicable. Female Single Head of Household.				Job Training				●
				Math				●
				English				●
				Career Guidance		●		
				Work Experience		●		
				Counseling				●
				Consumer Education				●
				Community Development				●
				Recreation		●		
				Health				●
				Home Management	NA			
				Early Childhood	NA			

FIGURE 5

UTILITY RATING OF MOUNTAIN-PLAINS PROGRAM ELEMENTS

TABLE 1

SELF RATING OF PERSONAL AND WORK TRAIT CHANGES

Male		Female	
Improved	Regressed	Improved	Regressed
Not Applicable. Female Single Head of Household.		Industriousness	Self-Confidence
		Accepts Responsibility(tasks)	Self-Control
		Cooperation	Competence
		Courtesy	Accuracy
		Social Contact	
		Ambition	

TABLE 2

GENERAL QUESTIONS

1. "Rate Mountain-Plains as an influence in your life."

	Very Positive	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Very Negative
Male	NA				
Female				x	

2. "Knowing what you know now, would you have chosen Mountain-Plains?"

	Definitely Yes	Probably Yes	Don't Know	Probably No	Definitely No
Male	NA				
Female	x				

3. "What is your rating for your current life in general?"

	Completely Satisfied	Well Satisfied	Neither Extreme	A Little Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied
Male	NA				
Female					x

4. "Rate your success:

		Completely Successful 9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	Completely Unsuccessful 0
The year before M-P."	Male										
	Female					Data Unavailable.					
Now."	Male										
	Female										
Five years from now."	Male										
	Female										